

Cambridge Pre-U: Guide for UK Higher Education Admissions Staff

Cambridge Pre-U is a new post-16 qualification. This award aims to better prepare students for higher education and is designed to help them gain an in-depth knowledge of the subjects studied and to develop the skills needed for university study.

Why was Cambridge Pre-U developed?

Cambridge Pre-U was developed in response to requests from UK schools for an alternative to A Level that would fully support successful progression from school to undergraduate study and beyond. It was developed in consultation with schools, Higher Education and subject associations. Cambridge Pre-U has been accredited by Ofqual and is funded for teaching in the maintained sector.

Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Principal Subject, Short Course and GPR)

There are 27 individual Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects, certificated separately and assessed at the end of a two-year programme of study. Cambridge Pre-U Short Courses (one-year) are available for Modern Languages, Mathematics and Further Mathematics. A Short Course can be taken in the first or second year of study and is offered in order to encourage students to develop a broad subject portfolio.

Cambridge Pre-U Diploma



Full award for students who have passed four components comprised of three Certificates (Principal Subjects) chosen from 27 subjects plus the core component, Global Perspectives and Research (GPR). Up to two A Levels can be substituted for Cambridge Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects).

Global Perspectives and Research (GPR)

Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) constitutes the compulsory core of the Diploma, and can also be taken as a freestanding package and certificated separately.

How do Cambridge Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects) compare with A Levels?

A Level	Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subject
360 class contact hours	380 class contact hours
6 passing grades A*-E	9 passing grades D1- P3 with one grade higher than A*
Examinations are modular taken over the two year period of study	Examinations are linear with all examinations taken at the end of the two year period of study
Individual modules can be retaken	Re-sits only available one year later by taking all the examination papers for the whole subject
Includes one paper that looks across the different modules (synoptic assessment)	Papers are taken at the end of the course with candidates expected to make links between topic areas

What is GPR?

In order to encourage all students to develop the skills targeted by Global Perspectives and Research (GPR), it is available as a stand alone course/examination in addition to serving as the core for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. It comprises Global Perspectives (a taught course) and an Research Report.

Global Perspectives encourages breadth across the curriculum through the interdisciplinary study of a number of themes of global relevance, developing critical thinking and a range of study and research skills. The Research Report promotes the exercise of the skills taught in Global Perspectives, and helps prepare students to cope with the demands of university study.

For further information regarding GPR, please refer to our *GPR: Information for Universities* document.

The UCAS Tariff recommendations

The UCAS Tariff recommendations reflect the fact that the standard of work required for a Distinction 3 will be pegged to that currently required for an A grade at A Level. However, the Tariff awards 130 points to D3, against 120 for A grade at A Level. The Tariff thus takes into account several features that make Cambridge Pre-U distinctive:

Size: A Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Principal Subject) is larger than an A Level and has been assigned 380 Guided Learning Hours by OFQUAL (compared with 360 for A Level). Students therefore need to cover more subject content.

Stretch: All the examinations must be taken together at the end of the two year period of study. Modules cannot be taken separately, nor can they be retaken, without retaking the entire qualification. The assessment also includes more open and challenging questions.

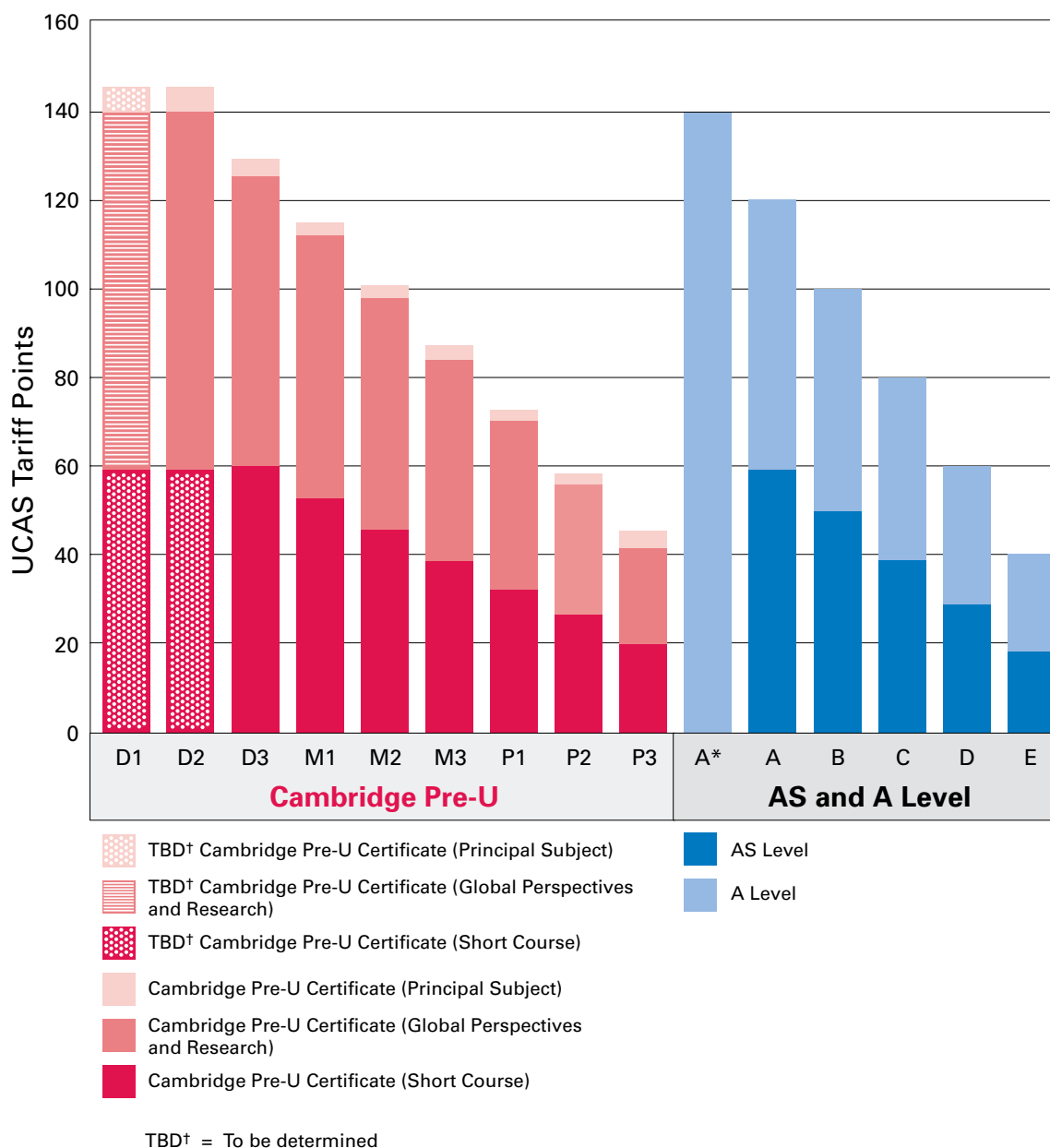
Structure: The 'linearity' of the assessment allows for a more coherent and synoptic experience of the subject. While many universities do not use UCAS Tariff Points in framing their offers, they may nevertheless use the tariff to provide a benchmark for fair and objective comparison with A Levels.

Using UCAS Tariff Points as the benchmark for comparison, universities can translate Cambridge Pre-U grades in a straightforward way. For instance, as the table below shows, offers requiring B grades at A Level (100 tariff points) should be translated as M2 (which has 101 tariff points). At the top end, it is clear that the equivalent grade to A* is Distinction 2, and at the lower end that the equivalent grade to E is P3.

Cambridge Pre-U Band	Cambridge Pre-U Grade	Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Principal Subject) UCAS Tariff	Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (Short Course) UCAS Tariff	Cambridge Pre-U Certificate (GPR) UCAS Tariff	Equivalent A Level grades and comments
Distinction	D1	TBC*	TBC*	TBC*	D1 has no equivalent A & AS Level grade. It represents a standard of excellence across all papers in the subject.
Distinction	D2	145	TBC*	140	D2 is set with the A* at A & AS Level in view.
Distinction	D3	130	60	126	The D3 standard is aligned to that of A grade at A & AS Level, in that the standard of work required to achieve a D3 will be the same as that required for an A grade. But note: a Pre-U candidate has to cover more ground (the syllabus is bigger), additional stretch is built into the question papers and students have to take all papers in one session.
Merit	M1	115	53	112	M1 has a similar tariff score to A grade at A & AS Level, reflecting the bigger syllabus and the fact that individual components cannot be retaken.
Merit	M2	101	46	98	M2 has a tariff score equivalent to B grade at A & AS Level.
Merit	M3	87	39	84	M3 and P1 tariff scores fall equal distances on either side of the A & AS Level C grade.
Pass	P1	73	32	70	
Pass	P2	59	26	56	P2 has a tariff score equivalent to D grade at A & AS Level.
Pass	P3	46	20	42	The standard of work required for P3 is aligned to that of E grade at A & AS Level. The higher tariff reflects the characteristics described above.
Ungraded	U				

*TBC= A UCAS tariff will be set after sufficient candidate evidence has become available.

How does the UCAS Tariff apply to Cambridge Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects)?



How is Cambridge Pre-U graded?

The overall Cambridge Pre-U Diploma score is calculated by adding together the four individual components which are each given a numerical score out of 24 giving a maximum score of 96. The minimum passing mark for the diploma is 32.

Students will receive a certificate for individual Principal Subjects, GPR and Short Courses and an additional certificate if they have met the requirements for the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma.

Cambridge Pre-U Applications

The majority of applicants will be applying with a combination of Cambridge Pre-U Principal Subjects and A Levels, or with Principal Subjects but without the Diploma.

For further information regarding offers which include Pre-U qualifications, please refer to our document: *Cambridge Pre-U: Guide for framing offers.*

University acceptance

Over 140 UK universities including Oxford and Cambridge, have accepted the Cambridge Pre-U as equivalent to other Level 3 qualifications. The UK Russell Group has welcomed the academic rigour, retention of subject specialism and linear approach of this qualification.

The **University of Cambridge** and **University of Oxford** accept the Cambridge International Pre-U Certificates as an alternative to A-Levels and will accept the Cambridge International Pre-U Diploma as meeting the general entry requirements.

The **University of Warwick** will accept the Cambridge International Pre-U Certificates as an alternative to A-levels and will accept the Cambridge International Pre-U Diploma as meeting the general entry requirements.

The **University of Edinburgh** welcomes applicants offering the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma. Combinations of individual Pre-U subjects and A-level subjects will be acceptable if three subjects are offered overall in a suitable subject combination and normally in one examination diet.

Durham University will accept the Cambridge Pre-U qualification as suitable for admission to its undergraduate courses provided all other entry requirements, such as English Language proficiency, are met. Durham notes the academic rigour of the linear approach, the retention of subject specialism and the expanded reporting scale at the top end of achievement.

Cardiff University will consider applicants offering the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma qualification and formulate its offers on an equivalent basis with existing level 3 qualifications. The university will also accept Pre-U Principal Subjects in lieu of GCE A Level subjects.

Newcastle University welcomes applications from candidates offering the Cambridge International Pre-U Diploma. Offers will normally be made in terms of achievement of the Diploma plus specified subjects and grades in the Principal Subjects. Cambridge International Pre-U Certificates will be accepted as alternatives to A-levels.

The **University of Surrey** believes the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma to be a suitable preparation for entrance to its degree programmes. Principal subjects within the diploma will be considered in the same manner as A Levels and will also be accepted as free standing qualifications.

Recognition of the value of GPR

Universities have also commented on the value that Cambridge Pre-U GPR adds to a student's university application.

Bristol University values the GPR, and encourages admissions tutors to make two alternative offers to students offering this qualification, one of which specifies achievement in the GPR.

University of Exeter values the Global Perspectives and Research (GPR) element of the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma and its role in preparing students for a successful higher education experience.

University of Sussex welcomes the value of the breadth offered by elements such as Global Perspectives and the Research Report.

Who else accepts Cambridge Pre-U?

A full list of UK universities who have conformed their recognition of Cambridge Pre-U can be found at <http://recognition.cie.org.uk> by searching on *UK, Higher Education and Cambridge Pre-U*.

Sample certificate



Learn more! For more information on Cambridge Pre-U visit www.cie.org.uk/cambridgepreu or contact Customer Services on **+44 (0)1223 553554** or email international@cie.org.uk

